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ABSTRACT

This 2-year program, which began operation in 1969 side by side with the traditional program, has three primary phases. These are: a continuous seminar of 30 elementary education students for planning, evaluation, and discussion of activities; a substantive panel of experts who provide lectures and consultations; and a field experience assignment with gradually increasing responsibility. The emphasis is on flexibility and independent study. Each student is assigned to a seminar group which remains the same throughout the program. He is then free to arrange a study program with the substantive panel in order to attain the necessary "competencies," which are announced at the beginning of the program. The seminar leader assigns field experience on one of three levels--classroom observer, teacher aide, or student teacher--based on his evaluation of the student. Important features of the program are that it operates within existing budget limits and that it attempts to design a program based in modern humanistic thought and current theory and research in teacher education. A research project has been designed using students in the traditional course as a control group with pre- and posttesting. (RT)

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# University of Florida Experimental Program in Elementary Education

The University of Florida New Elementary Program grew out of a year of study by a large cross-departmental committee of interested faculty of the College of Education. Beginning their deliberations from the theoretical position stated by Arthur Combs in his book, The Professional Education of Teachers, the committee first modified these concepts to fit local conditions, then designed a new operational model for the education of elementary teachers. This program was placed in operation January 1, 1969, side by side with the College's existing program and accompanied by an extensive research project designed to measure its effectiveness.

## Major Objectives

In addition to the guidelines provided by general theory, five special objectives were sought. These were:

1. The "Self as Instrument Concept". The production of effective professional workers is a problem in becoming. An effective teacher is one who has learned effectively how to use himself and his knowledge of children and subject matter. This kind of personal discovery calls for a program providing maximum opportunities for self direction and student responsibility for learning.

2. Maximum Flexibility. Students come to the College of Education with varying backgrounds, experience and widely divergent needs. Teacher education programs must, therefore, contain sufficient fluidity to adjust to individual needs, permit wide variations in

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instructional programs and in rates of progress toward completion.

3. Close Relationship of Didactic Instruction and Practical Experience. An effective program calls for closest possible relationships between the student's practical experience and didactic instruction. Participation in actual teaching should begin as early as possible. Thereafter, programs should provide for continuously increasing time and responsibility in the classroom. Internship experience should be spread throughout the training period rather than concentrated at the end.

4. Relation of Learning to Need. Learning is likely to be effective only when it is personally meaningful and relevant to the need of the learner. Need to know should precede exposure to information.

5. Reasonable Cost of Operation. The new program should operate as nearly as possible within current allocations of staff and expense.

## The Model

Teacher education at the University of Florida is a two year program in the third and fourth year. Subject matter preparation is primarily the responsibility of the College of Arts and Sciences. The New Elementary Program applies only to the professional phases of the students' preparation under direct control of the faculty of the College of Education. It is designed in three primary phases: the seminar, field experience and the substantive panel. (See chart)

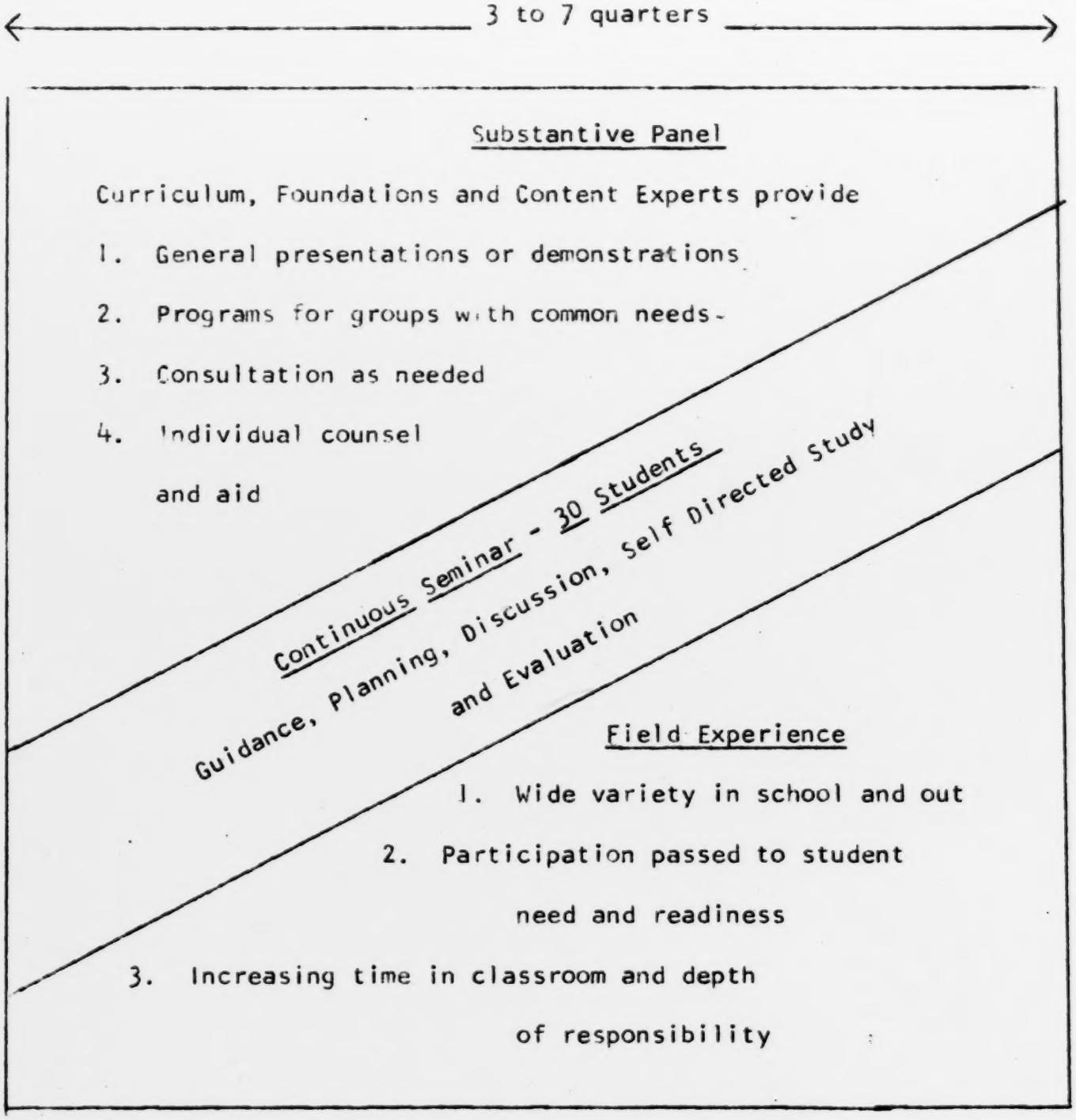
## The Seminar

The seminar is the heart of the program. As students enter the

Schematic Diagram: New Elementary Program

College of Education - University of Florida

Junior - Senior Year


3 to 7 quarters
Substantive Panel
Curriculum, Foundations and Content Experts provide
1. General presentations or demonstrations
2. Programs for groups with common needs-
3. Consultation as needed
4. Individual counsel and aid
Continuous Seminar - 30 Students
Guidance, Planning, Discussion, Self Directed Study and Evaluation
Field Experience
1. Wide variety in school and out
2. Participation passed to student need and readiness
3. Increasing time in classroom and depth of responsibility

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| Entrance assessment of academic and practical experience | Mid point diagnosis and plan for progress | Final evaluation and certification to teach |

program, they are assigned to a seminar and thereafter the same thirty students and seminar leader work together so long as the students remain in the program. Three are currently in operation. Each consists of one faculty member, specially chosen for sensitivity and skill in group leadership, and thirty students. As a student leaves the program, he is replaced by a new one entering the college for the first time. Since a thirty-to-one ratio is too great to accomplish the purposes of the seminar, the group of thirty is divided into two groups of fifteen and the seminar leader meets two hours a week with each group. To maintain group cohesiveness, all thirty students also meet together for a short period once a week and get together formally and informally several times during a term. At the end of each quarter the makeup of the groups is reconstituted to avoid crystallizing into two distinct sub-groups.

The seminar serves many functions. It is the place where the students' educational experience becomes personal and humanistic through interaction with a faculty member who is easily approachable and obviously committed to them, and through interaction with twenty-nine other friendly cohorts who share their joys, fears, successes and failures. It is also the place where, through discussion and exploration, students discover the personal meaning of the didactic and experiential aspects of the program, and begin to realize the meaning of their entire educational experience. In the seminar the student is engaged in a dynamic personal relationship with other human beings and,

if he or she remains open to new experiences, humanness expands and matures.

The seminar provides a place where students develop security in themselves as teachers and as persons, where they receive personal counseling and guidance and plan for the future. Individual progress records are maintained in the seminar which include all evaluations made on students as well as their diaries of all activities engaged in. These records provide a continual picture of the staff's evaluation of the student, the student's growth, and his reactions to the experience.

A third aspect of the seminar is the "Newsletter", a dittoed program distributed to the students each week. It includes announcements of forthcoming program activities, presentations of substantive panel staff, topics of small group meetings and a calendar of university and community activities of special interest to the students.

## The Substantive Panel

In place of traditional "courses" taught in a given quarter, instructors are continuously available to students throughout the program in each of the areas of competence required for elementary teaching. This is called the Substantive Panel. Instructors are assigned to this panel as they would be to teach a regular 4-hour course and spend their time as follows: one hour a week in a set lecture or demonstration, two hours in small group instruction in response to

student needs and one hour in individual conferences.

Students are not expected to "complete courses" but to develop competence. When they enter the program they are given "Competency Sheets" which list the competencies in each substantive area they will be expected to develop during their stay in the program. They receive guidance and counseling help with program planning from their seminar leader, but students make their own decisions about how to spend their time and which aspects of the program they will take advantage of. All are required to attend seminar sessions and such small groups as they sign up for. Otherwise, attendance is entirely voluntary. Each student works out how he plans to develop competency within a given area with the appropriate staff member and determines for himself how long he will take to do so.

## Field Experience

Students engage in some aspect of the teaching process in every quarter they are in the program. Assignments to field experience change each quarter to assure that all students get a variety of experience in urban, suburban, laboratory, ghetto and middle class schools. In consultation with the seminar leader, who considers their previous experience, level of maturity and other factors, the student is assigned each quarter to one of three levels of experience:

Level 1: A combination of classroom observation and tutoring. The student observes various classrooms in the area until he and his

advisor decide that he has benefited as much as possible from the experience. This activity lasts four to ten weeks and is engaged in for one hour a week. Concurrently, the student tutors a single student from one of the local schools for one hour a week for a minimum of ten weeks.

Level II: Teacher assistant. The student is assigned to a teacher six hours a week and assists the teacher in any way he can. This may involve such things as record keeping, individual work with children, small group work and occasional teaching.

Level III: Teacher associate. This is a progression from level II in which the student accepts increasing responsibility beginning from teaching and aiding two hours per day to a final five weeks of full time responsibility.

## Evaluation

Students are continuously evaluated and counseled informally in the seminar experiences. They are further evaluated by substantive panel staff as they meet requirements for area competencies. Midway in the program students request a mid-point review with a staff committee to assess progress and plan ahead. At the end of the program students are finally evaluated by a staff committee which recommends certification to teach.

To supply quarterly grades required by the University, students are evaluated each quarter on their field experience and the quality

of the competencies completed in that grading period.

## Budget

No outside funds are available for this program. A criterion for its establishment was that it not exceed costs of our existing program. Consequently, faculty, administrative and clerical help are assigned on the same ratio as those current in the College of Education generally. Separate budgets have not been attempted.

## Research Evaluation and Contribution to Improvement of Teacher Education

An extensive research design has been instituted by which this program will eventually be tested. Operating side by side with a more orthodox program will make comparisons continuously possible. In addition to the data available from field experience and other records, all students in the program have been pre-tested on a battery of 13 instruments to measure such qualities as attitudes, beliefs, values, self concept, social cohesion, creativity, social status and personality. A control group from the regular program has been given a selection of these instruments also and field evaluations on students from both groups will be collected. In this way it is expected hard data of value in improving teacher education practices may be obtained. From the research data important conclusions should be possible with respect to the hypotheses of this program and the philosophy and techniques it attempts to delineate.

Of equal importance for the improvement of teacher education are the following contributions which may be unique to this program:

1. "Spin-off" from the side by side operation of two programs has already proven of great value in questioning practices and stimulating innovations elsewhere in the College.

2. Most innovations in teacher education are made by piecemeal variations in existing procedures. A unique feature of this program is its attempt to design a program firmly based in modern humanistic thought from psychology and current theory and research in teacher education. We believe the systematic development of our techniques from basic theory may prove to be most fruitful both as a demonstration of such an approach and for the innovations it suggests for teacher education generally.

3. The fact that this program has been designed and placed in effective operation within existing budgetary limits is a demonstration, in itself, of what may be accomplished without infusion of outside funds. In a time when many believe extensive financing is a prerequisite for attempting significant innovations this demonstration may prove a salutary encouragement for others.